

issues - Labor

Labor

Throughout her tenure in the U.S. House of Representatives, Congresswoman Slaughter has distinguished herself as a leader on issues of concern to working Americans. Below are just a few of the labor-related issues where Congresswoman Slaughter has been an active voice for the rights of workers.

Protecting Access to Overtime Pay

In the 108th Congress, Congresswoman Slaughter fought to ensure that America's workers receive fair compensation when they work more than 40-hours in a week. Rep. Slaughter views access to overtime pay as a vital wage and hour issue that has significant financial impact on middle-class families. Below are some of the key actions that Congresswoman Slaughter took on this issue:

Worked to defeat legislation that would allow employers to substitute compensation time for overtime pay by organizing a worker rally in the district and Washington.

Wrote to the Department of Labor in opposition to proposed rules that threaten access to overtime pay for 8 million American workers and voted to bar the Department of Labor from enforcing the new overtime rule and organized a worker rally in the district to bring attention to fight against the overtime rules.

Supporting the Right of Workers to Organize and Bargain

Congresswoman Slaughter's longstanding commitment to workers' rights to organize and collectively bargain in both the public and private sectors has been recognized time and again. In fact, the AFL-CIO has consistently ranked Congresswoman Slaughter's voting record at 100%. Here are some highlights from Rep. Slaughter's record:

- Cosponsoring of the Employee Right to Choose Act, legislation to simplify workers' ability to organize by establishing a "card check" process where a union is certified when a majority of workers sign authorization cards. This measure would increase penalties for employers that intimidate or fire workers for union activity.
- Supporting legislation to prohibit employers from permanently replacing striking workers, thereby ensuring that the lines of communication between labor and management stay open during disputes, fostering the kind of cooperative partnership between workers and employers envisioned by the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA).
- Opposed legislation to allow companies to discriminate against workers who help organize a union. She opposed efforts to interfere with the ability of unions to educate members about issues impacting their jobs and families as well as efforts to prohibit the National Labor Relations Board from protecting worker rights through injunctions and certain investigations.
- Has been a strong protector of the Davis-Bacon Act, which ensures that workers employed in federal contract construction receive not less than the locally prevailing wage. She is also an original cosponsor of legislation to overturn President Bush's Executive Order 13202, which prohibits the use of project labor agreements on any federally funded construction project.
- Cosponsored a bill to improve compliance with labor and workplace safety laws by providing that firms that violate these laws may be ineligible for federal procurement and assistance programs.
- Cosponsored a bill to allow collective bargaining rights for public safety employees employed by the states. She is also a cosponsor of legislation to require public-private competition before work is taken from federal sector employees and given to outside contractors.

Protecting Retirement Savings

Congresswoman Slaughter has consistently supported legislation to broaden the level of retirement savings by workers and enhance federal protection of that savings. The bankruptcy filing of Global Crossing, on the heels of the Enron Corporation's sudden collapse, has brought to light the vulnerabilities of our current pension laws. To enhance pension security and savings, Representative Slaughter has:

Voted in favor of legislation to enhance pension protections to give employees extensive control over their money in 401(k) plans, subject executive compensation to bankruptcy claims, and require employee notification when executives dump company stock, among other provisions. Congresswoman Slaughter voted against proposals to allow corporations to raid the pension funds relied upon by workers and cosponsored legislation to protect older workers' pensions.

To increase opportunities for pension savings, Congresswoman Slaughter voted for the Comprehensive Retirement Security and Pension Reform Act, which raised the IRA contribution limit, expanded pension coverage, enhanced pension coverage for women, increased pension portability, and reduced regulatory burdens.

Worked to ensure that the interests of current and former Global Crossing and Frontier employees are not forgotten in the bankruptcy proceedings by asking the court to order expedited lump sum payments to former employees and give employee stockholders priority status during the proceedings.

Protecting American Jobs and Promoting Fair Trade

Congresswoman Slaughter has taken a multi-faceted approach to maintaining and growing opportunities for American workers. Rep. Slaughter has:

Introduced legislation to establish a Trade Impact Review Commission, to assess the impact of NAFTA and China's entry into the World Trade Organization on American jobs. This measure also requires the President to consider Commission finding in the development of future trade agreements.

Introduced legislation to promote the growth of domestic manufacturing of electronic components by requiring the Departments of Defense and Homeland Security to purchase equipment with domestically-manufactured electronic components.

Cosponsored "The Fair Trade for Our Future" resolution, a bipartisan measure that would require the U.S. Trade Representative to adhere to minimum labor, environment and human rights standards when negotiating trade agreements.

Cosponsored legislation to promote domestic manufacturing by providing a tax benefit that is proportional to the level of manufacturing that is undertaken in the United States. Thus, firms that maintain all their manufacturing operations in

the U.S. would receive 100% of the benefit whereas businesses that only undertake 25% of their manufacturing in the United States would only get 25% of the benefit.

Cosponsored legislation to provide job opportunities in the agricultural sector and a stable legal workforce.

Supports efforts to prevent plans to privatize nearly one half of the federal workforce, opposed the Administration's decision to reduce the pay of federal employees and efforts to decrease civil service protections.

Supports the Emergency Steel Guaranteed Loan Program and steel tariffs against foreign producers to stabilize domestic steel manufacturing.

Working to Prevent Workplace Injuries and Promote Safety

Congresswoman Slaughter was one of the chief opponents of the bill that repealed Occupational Safety and Health Administration's (OSHA) ergonomics standard in 2001. Additionally, Congresswoman Slaughter voted against slashing the workplace safety and health budget.

Working to Protect Against Unfair Labor Practices

Congresswoman Slaughter opposed legislation to give the President greater "trade promotion authority" in negotiating international agreements because it would weaken Congress' ability to address important labor concerns. She has also:

- Supported the Stop Sweatshops Act, a bill to make garment manufacturers and retailers liable for labor violations committed by their contractors and subcontractors. More recently, she joined with House colleagues to remind the organizers of the FIFA World Cup competition of their earlier commitment to refrain from acquiring apparel and

equipment that are produced in sweatshops.

- Supported a bill to enforce fair labor practices in the Northern Mariana Islands, a commonwealth of the United States, where manufacturers were paying far less than minimum wage but labeling garments as "Made in the USA."
- Cosponsored a bill to prevent employers from classifying workers as independent contractors to avoid paying employment taxes and being subject to other federal labor laws.
- Is cosponsoring a bill to require an employer to provide written notification to an employee when purchasing life insurance on the life of the employee and designates a beneficiary other than the individual who is the subject of the policy.
- Is cosponsoring legislation to exempt from federal taxation backpay and front pay received when employees prevail in suits against employers for unlawful discrimination.

Worker Training and Assistance

In an effort to ensure that American workers remain competitive, Congresswoman Slaughter has been a strong proponent of federal training and education programs. Her actions included:

Opposing cutting 9.5% of the Workforce Investment Act's funding, as proposed in President Bush's budget. Congresswoman Slaughter is a strong supporter of the Workforce Investment Act, which provides comprehensive job placement and re-training services to dislocated workers at coordinated "One-Stop" centers.

To ensure that workers harmed by international trade get the income support and training they need, cosponsoring a bill to reform the Trade Adjustment Assistance program by extending income support from 52 to 78 weeks and broadening the eligibility criteria.

Cosponsoring of the Regional Skills Alliances Act, legislation to create a Labor Department grant program to support regional alliances made up of local labor, business and political leaders working together to improve job skills for employment in specific industries.

Voting to preserve community control over job training programs and to preserve the School-to-Work program, which is designed to help high school seniors make the transition to work.

Cosponsoring and vigorously fighting for the permanent exclusion from workers' taxable income of any employer-provided educational assistance. A temporary exclusion for most educational assistance had been enacted into law in 1996.

Cosponsoring of legislation to provide vocational education, training, employment counseling, and related services for single parents, homemakers, and individuals seeking to enter the workforce from nontraditional employment.

Cosponsoring the American Manufacturing Works Act, establishing an Undersecretary of Commerce for Manufacturing and Technology, funding the Manufacturing Extension Partnership Program, and promoting and funding education programs for manufacturing technicians.

Supports funding for Job Corp, the nation's largest and most comprehensive residential, education and job training program for at-risk youth, ages 16 through 24.

Supporting Working Families

In addition to supporting legislation to substantially raise the federal minimal wage, Congresswoman Slaughter has distinguished herself as an advocate for workers struggling to balance the challenges of work and family. She is an active member of the Congressional Labor and Working Families Caucus and has:

Cosponsored the Fair Minimum Wage Act, legislation to increase the minimum wage to \$6.65 an hour over the next three years.

Helped lead the fight to enact the Family and Medical Leave Act, legislation that allows parents to balance their workplace responsibilities with caring for sick family members.

Supported enactment of the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act, which allows workers to maintain their eligibility for health insurance when they change jobs.

Helped defeat the "Family Time Flexibility Act" because it would not ensure working women more control of their daily schedules and would destroy overtime protections that are important to working mothers, and it would reduce the income of families struggling to make ends meet.

Promoting Equal Opportunity in the Workplace

As a vice chair of the Congressional Women's Caucus, Congresswoman Slaughter has long been identified as a leader in the fight against workplace discrimination. She has:

Authored a bill to prevent employers from discriminating based on a worker's genetic information.

Supported the Paycheck Fairness Act, which seeks to eliminate gender based wage discrimination as well as legislation recognizing the significance of Equal Pay Day to demonstrate the disparity between wages paid to men and women.

Worked successfully to enact the Civil Rights Act of 1991, which reversed Supreme Court rulings that made it harder for workers to bring and win job discrimination lawsuits. It also allowed money damages for victims of harassment and other intentional discrimination based on sex, religion or disability.

Supported legislative efforts aimed at stopping workplace discrimination based on sex, race, national origin, or sexual orientation and strongly supported of the successful effort to subject Congress to federal employee protection and anti-discrimination laws.

Cosponsored legislation to prohibit employment discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and a bill to provide benefits to domestic partners of Federal employees.

Assisting the Unemployed

In this difficult economy, Congresswoman Slaughter has supported efforts to extend benefits to assist the unemployed. She has:

Cosponsored multiple bills to extend the Temporary Extended Unemployment Compensation Act and to provide additional coverage for workers in high unemployment states.

Organized rallies and petition drives to draw attention to the plight of workers who have exhausted all their state and federal unemployment benefits.

Cosponsored a bill to repeal the inclusion of unemployment benefits in gross income for tax purposes. Requested adequate funding for the Workforce Investment Act, which provides training for the unemployed.

Supporting Local Union Employers & Employees

United Steelworkers Local 28-57: In September 2002, Congresswoman Slaughter intervened with NYSEG on behalf of Tom Nichols and Mike Swan from Local 28-57 to advocate the NYSEG provide Allvac with a 10-year contract at rates of five cents per kilowatt. This contract was part of Local 28-57's efforts to re-open Allvac's Lockport facility and expand their business in Western New York.

Int'l Chemical Workers Union Council Local 76: FMC, like many other Western New York manufacturers, is faced with unfair competition from increased Chinese imports. As a result of meeting with officials from Local 76 and FMC, Rep. Slaughter has continuously pressured the U.S. Commerce Department to enforce anti-dumping restrictions on Chinese chemical products including persulfates, a product which is also manufactured by FMC at its Tonawanda facility. Rep. Slaughter also arranged a meeting for FMC officials with the influential Canadian-American Business Council to help grow this local union company. She is also arranging for James Jochum, Assistant Secretary for Export Administration at Commerce, to tour FMC to personally witness what happens when the Department of Commerce is "asleep on the job" and not taking our \$103 billion trade deficit with China seriously.

Goodyear Tire in Niagara Falls: Last year, Rep. Slaughter intervened on behalf of Goodyear and the United Steelworkers of America to request that Goodyear receive and power allocation under the Power-for-Jobs program. In today's economy competition is very keen and any cost advantage must be pursued in order to ensure the future of the plant and its employees. This allocation represented a formidable tool to allow Goodyear to retain and potentially create new jobs.

PACE International Union Local 1-3516, President Rick Sirianni: On behalf of Local 1-3516 and Carbide Graphite, Rep. Slaughter personally contacted the company's four creditors and NYS Empire Development to lobby them to work with the union to keep this company open in Western New York. Although the plant ultimately closed, Rep. Slaughter worked tirelessly with the union to pursue every possible lead to keep the facility open.

National Treasury Employees Union: On behalf of 30 local IRS workers, Rep. Slaughter is leading efforts in the House of Representatives to oppose the proposed reduction-in-force (RIF) which could eliminate over 30 positions in Buffalo. Not

only will the RIF cost dedicated and experienced civil servants their careers, but the effectiveness and responsiveness of the IRS will likely decrease in Western New York. In addition, by eliminating this local presence, IRS officials will be stationed far from the field employees whom they support, which may likely increase errors and create delays in the system.

Postal Employees: Rep. Slaughter has assisted several federal employees, including many letter carriers and postal workers, resolve their workers compensation difficulties. She helped one employee pursue a second opinion to certify her injury, while another was assisted in receiving an expedited authorization for a medical procedure.